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Dear Miss Walker

Special measures monitoring inspection of Milton School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 1 and 2 March 2023, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in September 2022.

During the inspection, David Milligan, His Majesty's Inspector (HMI), and David Penny, Ofsted Inspector (OI), discussed with you and other senior leaders, the acting chief executive officer (CEO) of the ICAT multi-academy trust, other staff and the local authority, the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also carried out visits to lessons, meetings with teachers, classroom support assistants and non-teaching staff. We held meetings with pupils, observed lunchtime, reviewed safeguarding documentation including the school's single central record, considered Ofsted's parent survey, Ofsted's staff survey and comments from parents. The lead inspector also met with a representative from Education Exchange to discuss future plans for the school. Other documents such as the school's development plan and self-evaluation form were also reviewed. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Milton School remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made insufficient progress to improve the school.

I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

The school should take further action to:

- safeguard the well-being and safety of pupils by ensuring that the school site is secure so pupils cannot leave without permission
- make sure that all staff, including temporary staff, know how to report and record any safeguarding and behavioural incidents
- train all staff with appropriate behaviour management and de-escalation strategies
- create an environment where pupils feel safe at school.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Due to the high number of complaints regarding specific issues, we agreed that inspectors would focus their activities on safeguarding and behaviour. Since you started as principal in September 2022, the school has continued to face significant challenges. Many staff have left the school or are on long-term sickness absence. This has resulted in staffing instability with temporary staff in post as both teachers and classroom support assistants. The CEO of ICAT multi-academy trust has also recently been replaced with an acting CEO, who is currently in post. In February 2023, the school started work with Education Exchange who are supporting with leadership and the transition to a new multi-academy trust, later this year. Prior to the February 2023 half-term holiday, the school was partially closed due to staffing shortages; there were concerns about the impact staff shortages would have on pupils' safety and well-being.

In our initial discussion about what steps have been taken to improve the school since the last inspection, you were clear that reading and foundation subjects across the curriculum are not fit for purpose. A start had been made to introduce a phonics programme but the consultant supporting the phonics lead no longer works with the school. Due to the lack of leadership capacity and expertise within the school, no further work has taken place to implement a coherent early reading offer or structured curriculum for other subjects.

The lack of leadership and support from the multi-academy trust has prevented any improvements being made. As headteacher, you currently occupy an isolated role and cannot manage the volume and complexities of problems that exist. You are currently acting as the special educational needs coordinator in a school where every pupil has an education, health and care plan. You are trying to manage a staffing crisis, along with persistent complaints and high-level pupil behavioural issues. There is currently no governance structure and little support from the multi-academy trust. Meetings with the local authority demonstrated that you have positive, challenging relationships with them. I am assured that support from the local authority will continue.

Safeguarding is still not effective. Very recent modifications to fire alarm touch points now prevent pupils from persistently triggering the alarm but for too long this has not been

addressed. The impact on pupils' safety and well-being by this constant interruption has been significant. On a regular basis, pupils abscond from school as the doors automatically open when the alarm is triggered. Staff are not trained in how to deal with this, putting pupils and themselves at risk. A new policy is now in place to ensure that there is a consistent approach should pupils abscond, however, this is still not understood by all staff. Many staff do not know how to record and report safeguarding concerns appropriately. The use of the school's online recording system is improving. However, improvements regarding the categorisation of incidents and a lack of chronology to track concerns have not been good enough. Officers from the local authority are currently conducting a safeguarding audit and recognise that procedures need to quickly improve.

Pupils still do not feel safe in school. They report that poor language, physical disruption and activation of the fire alarms makes them feel unsafe. This has not changed since the previous inspection. There are still incidents of violent, aggressive behaviours in school. Staff continue to struggle to deal with the severity and number of incidents. Staff report that there are not enough trained adults to help support challenging, vulnerable pupils. Some pupils feel that the more time they spend at school, the worse their life chances get. The continued lack of structure around social times can lead to confrontations and fighting. Currently, some non-teaching staff are concerned for their own well-being. They often feel unable to do their jobs as they are called to deal with behavioural issues.

Suspensions are high and are concentrated on a core group of twelve pupils who have experienced more than one suspension. Attendance remains low and is decreasing. Leaders do not analyse the data to inform them of patterns and strategies for improvement. Attendance of the youngest pupils is the lowest of all year groups. Similarly, physical interventions are not currently analysed and tracked so leaders do not know why they are required and how to minimise their use.

The very recent partnership work with Education Exchange means that there is a vision and potential future for the school. As principal, you have welcomed the external support and early guidance that has been offered. Support has already included work to improve safeguarding procedures and behaviour management training.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the acting chief executive officer or equivalent of the ICAT multi-academy trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Rotherham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

David Milligan
His Majesty's Inspector